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PAMPHLETS

ON

THE COUNTRY CHURCH

vol. 2



A Year's Experience with the Country Church Program

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THE Country Church Program advocated by the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions through its Department of Church and Country Life has been well tested in the Presbytery of Huntingdon, Pa. It was this Presbytery that two years ago suggested to the Board the possibility of a country church program which should outline the needs of rural districts and emphasize the opportunity of the country church.

Situated in the central part of Pennsylvania, covering seven counties, largely rural, Huntingdon Presbytery is an ideal locality in which to try out such a program of action, and with vigor and enthusiasm they have been at this task for a year.

What, then, are some of the results which have been realized and the benefits which have been derived from this definite Program in this brief time?

I. IT HAS GIVEN NEW ENCOURAGEMENT TO COUNTRY PASTORS. This has in itself been a sufficient recommendation for the Program. If it had accomplished nothing else it would have been well worth while, for what the average country pastor needs is a new and more hopeful spirit. A pastor has written: "One of the convictions which has been forced upon me has been that the Country Church is capable of new life and expansion, no matter how discouraging its conditions may be financially and spiritually, if it is within the reach of population."

II. IT HAS CULTIVATED A CLOSER FELLOWSHIP AND A SPIRIT OF COMRADESHIP AMONG COUNTRY PASTORS.

They have been brought together by the Program in creating a common standard to work for and a comprehensive plan of campaign. The country pastor is overjoyed that his problems are being recognized by others; that he is no longer left to depressing isolation, but that these very problems are not peculiar to his particular field, and that others are seeking to aid him in solving them. As one has remarked: "The greatest benefit that I have derived from the Program is that it has given me greater confidence in agitating an advance along its lines to know that my course has the approval of a body of specially instructed men of various churches and communities. It has also been a guide in this agitation."

III. IT HAS DEMONSTRATED MOST CONCLUSIVELY THE NEED OF A MORE DEFINITE AND THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF RURAL COMMUNITIES.

Through the Department of Church and Country Life, Rev. T. Maxwell Morrison, of Bellona, N. Y., made an exhaustive study of rural conditions. Upon the basis of this survey the Presbytery is now planning its work. Besides this general survey, pastors have become more familiar with their own fields. One who has been ministering to two churches for over ten years says: "It was a surprise to me to find so many people in this place within three miles of about ten churches who had so little, if any, connection with our regular schools and congregations. It has stirred me up to get more accurate information of our whole section, with the purpose of urging our churches and schools to greater home missionary effort."

IV. IT HAS CAUSED PASTORS MORE FULLY TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE COUNTRY CHURCH CAN ACCOMPLISH ITS MISSION ONLY BY SERVING THE COMMUNITY.

Writes an active country pastor: "It has promoted a broader point of view concerning method, introducing country life meetings, interesting school children in gardens, planning for playgrounds, establishing a 'Social Center' building in the village."

V. IT HAS HELPED TO PROMOTE BETTER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.

The poor schooling facilities of rural districts are well known. The multiplicity of small, unsanitary schoolhouses betokens a woefully inefficient country school system. In one community a movement has been started to organize an up-to-date, graded, consolidated school, in place of the inadequate one-room school.

VI. IT HAS CALLED ATTENTION TO THE STUDY OF SCIENTIFIC AGRICULTURE.

No one can deny that this is vital to the prosperity of the farmer, and that his prosperity will affect in turn the prosperity of the Country Church. For the first time in its history the Pennsylvania State College has held a "Conference on Rural Conditions," to which it invited pastors and members of churches, irrespective of denomination, living in Central Pennsylvania. The co-operation of this well known and widely influential institution will be invaluable.

VII. IT HAS AWAKENED THE COUNTRY CHURCH TO THE IMPORTANCE OF REGULATING AND SUPERVISING THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE PEOPLE.

A resolution was passed at the Country Church Conservation Congress attended by different denominations within the bounds of the Presbytery: "The Country Church has an opportunity and responsibility in the matter of providing and directing the amusements of the boys and girls which it *dare not neglect*." A pastor has recently expressed the matter in this way: "One of the greatest problems of the present day for the Country Church is the supervision and control of the athletics and amusements of our young people."

VIII. IT HAS GIVEN THE PRESBYTERY THE COURAGE TO FACE ITS RESPONSIBILITY AND INCREASE THE SALARIES OF ITS COUNTRY PASTORS.

Some of our ministers had been living upon the shameful and meager salary of \$600 and \$650 a year. Now the minimum is \$800 and manse. The blessing this increase has been in putting new life and energy into the efforts of the country pastor can hardly be imagined until it is actually experienced.

IX. IT HAS ENCOURAGED THE SPIRIT OF FEDERATION which the Program has defined as "Co-operation everywhere and consolidation somewhere." A Country Church Conservation Congress, under the supervision of Rev. Warren H. Wilson, Ph.D., Superintendent of the Department of Church and Country Life, was held, at which seven denominations were represented by delegates, and the problems of the Country Church in their different aspects were discussed by specialists. One of the resolutions passed at this Congress recommended the organization of local Inter-church federations. Two of the seven counties of the Presbytery have now been organized and others will soon follow. A State Federation has also been formed, and it is confidently expected that some plan will soon be outlined to rectify conditions in over-churched districts. Splendid progress has as well been made in fostering the spirit of comity. The Central M. E. Conference, which includes within its boundaries most of the area of the Presbytery, has appointed a committee to make a special report on the problems of the Country Church. The spirit of co-operation on the part of this denomination is most encouraging.

X. IT HAS SHOWN THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF A SUPERINTENDENT.

The Presbytery has just secured such a Superintendent who will oversee this large and growing work of the Kingdom, and one of his most important duties will be to stimulate the spiritual life of the Country Churches by means of evangelism, which, after all, is a fundamental need, so recognized in the Country Church Program.

If the head-waters are kept pure and unpolluted the streams which are constantly flowing from them will be of the same character. To have a share in this work is to have a large part in hastening the time when these streams shall become a mighty river, making glad the city of our God; and this is not a small part of the duty and privilege of every minister and member of the Church of Jesus Christ.









